

# THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

*This bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religions Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war, and to provide information concerning the British Churches in wartime, as well as their contribution to post-war reconstruction.*

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## DELEGATION OF RUSSIAN CHURCHMEN VISITS BRITAIN

An historic event took place this week when, in return for the visit paid to Russia in 1943 by the Archbishop of York, a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church arrived in London in response to an invitation by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The delegation consists of Nikolai, Metropolitan of Krutitsi, a member of the Patriarchal Council, and two priests, the Archpriest Nicolai Kolchitsky, Propresbyter of the Patriarchal Council, and the Priest-Monk Juvenaliy Lunen. They are the guests of the Archbishop of Canterbury during their stay.

The visit had been arranged between the Orthodox Church and the Church of England and the fact that it has become possible is the cause of highest gratification in Anglican circles.

A full and interesting programme has been arranged for their stay. On arrival they were taken by car to Westminster Abbey, received by the Dean and taken into the Sanctuary for a short time of silent prayer. Then came a visit to Lambeth and to Canterbury. To-day (the Orthodox Ascension Day) there is a special Liturgy at the Greek Cathedral where they are being received by Archbishop Germanos. The University of London is holding a reception, and this evening there will be a special service of welcome and thanksgiving at St. Paul's Cathedral.

Other events in their programme include visits to the House of Commons, to the Archbishop of York at Bishopthorpe and to the Headquarters of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

### VE-SERVICES IN GERMANY

A Military Observer writes: "While people at home were going to thousands of places of

worship to give thanks for our victory in Europe, the soldiers of British Second Army, who won many of the vital battles, were holding services in conquered Germany.

"At one of these services, the Rev. J. B. V. White, Senior Chaplain to Forces, Third British Infantry Division, set forth the aims of British Second Army's crusade in Germany.

"The service, for the officers and men of divisional headquarters, was held in a German church hall. Lilac and tulips decorated the altar. The divisional commander, Major-General L. G. Whistler, C.B., D.S.O., was present, and the Lesson was read by the senior staff officer of operations.

"In his sermon, the Senior Chaplain said: "To the German people, we, as Christians, would say, "We would like to be able to treat you as brothers and with friendship, but we must insist on taking measures to protect and comfort our other European brothers upon whom you and your leaders have inflicted such untold suffering.

" "Our duty is to protect for the future those who have suffered so much at your hands. We are not your judges. God alone can judge human actions and motives, but we shall take all the steps we can to provide for a safe period of absence of war during which we can hope to build a more permanent structure of human peace."

"Speaking to the men who are serving with Second Army in its new phase of activities, in occupying Germany after having won victory in the field of battle, the Senior Chaplain said:

" "Our Christian faith must be implicit in our lives and in all our relationships if we are to succeed in the great tasks which lie before us.

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"If we are to give an example, if we are to preach the gospel of peace then we must live Christianity as individuals."

"The whole note of the service was one of thanksgiving to God for our great victory and of dedication for the future tasks. It was one of the most impressive services I have had the privilege of attending in the Army."

"At an appropriate moment in the prayers an officer read out the names of officers and men of divisional headquarters who had given their lives in the campaign, and the congregation observed a minute's silence of remembrance."

"Then the Senior Chaplain recited the familiar words, 'They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old,' etc."

"Similar services were held by the unit chaplains throughout the division."

### EMPIRE YOUTH SUNDAY

#### A MESSAGE FROM H.M. THE KING

H.M. The King sent the following message in reply to a loyal message from Lord Elton, Chairman of the Great Britain and Northern Ireland Committee for Empire Youth Sunday (June 10th):

"The Queen and I sincerely thank the members of your Committee for their message, and send our best wishes to all the young people observing Empire Youth Sunday throughout the Empire."

"At this turning point of history, it is fitting that the young should dedicate themselves anew to the service of God through citizenship of the British Empire."

"For better or worse, the ideals which they now set before themselves will mould world events for many generations to come. If their courage and hope are matched with spiritual force, then indeed, with God's help, they may achieve mighty things."

"On this day, when once again young people throughout the Empire will be expressing their sense of comradeship and common responsibility with their fellow members of our great family of nations, we of the older generation shall be with them in spirit and in prayer. May God bless them all."

GEORGE R.I."

### VICTORY AND DEDICATION

The lapse of a few weeks does not make the following sermon, preached at a Civic Thanksgiving in Sheffield Cathedral on May 13th, 1945, by the Bishop of Sheffield, less relevant.

*That Thy power, Thy glory and the mightiness of Thy kingdom might be known among men.*

Ps. 145, 12.

"Five years ago, all but two weeks, many of us here to-day gathered in this ancient church to supplicate God. It was a dark hour. The lights had gone out over Europe. Our life as a nation was imperilled. The Christian culture and heritage of the West were threatened as never before. The free peoples of Europe were about to be enslaved by a cruel, evil-possessed oppressor."

"In the months following, a great spiritual experience came to our people. They saw that there was more at stake than their own lives. People, like King, found themselves to be defenders of a Faith which was their heritage, and from which sprang the things in our common life we hold most dear—home, freedom, the fidelities and decencies of life. God touched us to finer issues. Not just by the deeds of those who fought the battle of Britain in the air and on the seas, not just by inspired leadership, but also by the resolve and unity of the people was the challenge met and strong allies drawn to our side. The war was won in those months—won, as it first had to be, on *the spiritual plane*, and then, slowly, surely, with gathering speed, on the military and political plane. If we had failed on the one level, we should have failed altogether. But in spite of the failures of previous years we did not fail. It was the Lord's doing and it should always be marvellous in our eyes to the ends of our days. 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name, be the praise.'"

"It has been noteworthy that our leaders in the field who have spoken in the last few days have acknowledged the hand of God in the course of events. As we at home perhaps cannot, they have felt themselves to be small actors in one of the most immense and dreadful tragedies of human history—unworthy instruments of the Divine Justice, bringing to pass, not merely the military defeat of a great and gifted nation, but its complete overthrow; and the liberation, not merely of prisoners and occupied countries, but of a civilization which has its roots in Christianity."

"It is not possible to exaggerate the scale of the happenings of these last days. The sweep of great allied forces across and forward from the rivers till East met West; the passing of great tyrants as well as of that grand American in the hour of triumph; a victory more complete than any in history; a judgment on a powerful nation which had become possessed by the very spirit of evil. What sufferings! What destructions! What a ruin of civilization! Never has there been such a slaughter of young men."



"Events of such magnitude, and of such tragic intensity, do not allow of light-hearted rejoicing, however great the sense of relief and thankfulness that the end has come in Europe, and however confident the rising hope that the enemy in the East may soon be driven to yield, and men can build again in peace and security. Can we stop there? Must not thanksgiving and resolution touch a deeper level and look beyond final military victory?

"Let me recall to you a searching parable of our Lord's:

"'When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return to my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it *empty*. Then he goeth and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.'

"A military victory is, of necessity, destructive and not constructive. It casts the devil out. It leaves a void. So in Europe now, the place occupied by a strong, ordered state has become a moral and spiritual vacuum. Not only that. An outstanding Dutch Churchman said to me the other week in London, 'In all European countries there is a *desert of nihilism*.' Men and women no longer know where they stand, or for what they stand. They have lost everything that makes a life; so that even victory and freedom regained do not quickly restore hope. They are paralysed; famished; *empty*. This vast emptiness, of which cities laid waste are an outward sign, is a menace, only less dangerous than the active evil of Nazi aggression. With what shall the void be filled? In our own country there also is, if not a vacuum, at least a vagueness and uncertainty where there should be a sure faith and a firmly held philosophy of life. This emptiness must be filled by a positive loyalty which wins obedience if we are to discharge our trusts, re-make our homes, and reconstruct society in Europe.

"Let the generous sacrifice of the young men to whose faithfulness we owe victory speak to our condition. In spite of the horrors of war, many of them have felt that what they were doing was absolutely the right thing for them to do at that moment, so they at least were not unhappy—even in their deaths. They knew from experience what St. Paul meant when he said, 'Neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy.' It is not for us to pity such men if their course has been short in years. They have climbed the heights; many of them are not far from the Kingdom of One

who for the joy before Him endured the Cross and is set down at the right hand of God.

"But woe to us who survive if we are just content to accept their sacrifice. Our thanksgiving, if it is to be Christian thanksgiving, must be a dedication, deeply resolved, corporate, personal. Let no individual think that he may throw back on that vague entity—the Community—trusts, duties, disciplines that are his.

"We have had a great deliverance, thank God. But to what end shall it be? That we may enjoy the power of conquerors and exploit the world? God forbid. Surely we have been delivered to share with all peoples the best we have to give. And what better have we to give than our Christian heritage, and all the social virtues and political wisdom that derive from it? Here, in England, faith in Jesus Christ has been the heart of our common life; His Church has been the cause by which all other good causes are fed.

"Only this week I received a letter from Burma that spoke of men seeing the evils and cruelties to which false principles and false gods lead, and realizing for the first time that the Christian faith has been the strength and marrow of the free nations, and is the distinctive faith which has made the British people benefactors and not oppressors. They may have taken it for granted too long and become careless of basic Christian loyalties. We have been saved, let us believe, to hand on this heritage and renew Christian civilization in the world.

"Victory, as we all know, is a testing experience. This time, God helping us, we must be 'more than conquerors'—good builders; peace-makers; saviours of hardly pressed men and nations. This can only be, as St. Paul says, 'Through Him who loved us.' It is a happy coincidence for Churchmen that victory in Europe has come in the week when the Church does homage to Christ, its ascended Lord and King. It is that devotion and faith we desire to share with all men for their good and our own. He is the only Leader to whom we can in absolute trust commit our ways, our cause, our friends: To whom be praise and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

#### A VE-CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN CONGREGATIONAL CHAPLAINS IN LONDON

Chaplain Emanuel Carlsen, of the U.S. Army, sends the following report of a VE-Conference in London:

"For the second time in this war period we, American Congregational Chaplains,



have had the privilege of meeting with our British Brethern in their Annual Assembly. It has also been our joy to have had three other Chaplains' Conferences arranged on behalf of the War Victims and Services Committee by Mrs. Frieda J. Demarest, their American Representative in Great Britain. Her capable, generous and courteous direction made this Conference, like all the others, one which will long be remembered.

"Due to the fact that we are divided into 'U.K.' and 'Continent' groups; and also to the fact that all of us felt VE-day approaching, this attendance was not large, only ten chaplains attending out of the seventeen who had hoped to be present: Chaplains Barney C. Crockett, Walter B. Jerge, John H. Olsen, Edgar Chandler, Waldo S. Richards, Carl A. Nyland, A. W. Solandt, Julius Appleton, Everett E. Denlinger, and Emanuel Carlsen. The Conference very kindly gave a special welcome to your reporter and to Chaplain Barney Crockett, who had come direct from Germany and France respectively.

"Besides attending some of the sessions of the Annual Assembly, there were three highlights to the Conference. The first was the public presentation of all the American Chaplains and their reception by the newly installed Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, Dr. A. M. Chirgwin, General Secretary of the London Missionary Society. Chaplain Chandler responded very graciously to this kind gesture on the part of our British friends.

"I think the second highlight was the fellowship we enjoyed with one another at the delicious luncheon provided by our Service Committee. A number of the leading British Congregational friends were present. These included: Dr. Sidney Berry, M.A. (Secretary, Congregational Union of England and Wales), Dr. Nathaniel Micklem, M.A. (Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford), Dr. A. M. Chirgwin, M.A. (General Secretary, London Missionary Society), Rev. J. M. Calder, M.A. (Chairman of the Congregational Union of Scotland), Mr. H. W. Lyde (Chairman of the Council of the Congregational Union of England and Wales), Mr. Edwin Foster (Chairman of the General Purposes Committee of the Congregational Union of England and Wales), and several British and Canadian Army, Navy and Air Force Chaplains.

"We went from this luncheon into a short informal session, in which we discussed 'Religion in the Front Line.' Due to the fact that the Speaker, the Rev. Vine Russell, R.N. (seconded to the B.B.C. as Assistant Organiser of Religious Broadcasts to the Forces)

could not attend owing to special VE-day broadcasts, the session was conducted by Chaplain Chandler in an informal way. Your reporter presented some observations based on his experiences in a Third Army hospital unit. These were that there was a definite turning to the Christian Faith by a minority of men in the front lines; that this turning was very sincere and definite; but that it needed to be nurtured and cultivated; that many men were thinking of the ministry as a future vocation; that the biggest task was still left undone—the receiving of these men into our Christian churches, enlisting them in active Church membership and service for Christ. We closed our service with a feeling of deep concern for our American soldiers. It was our prayer that all the spiritual impressions made upon them in the stress and strain of war may be clarified, confirmed and retained in the days of peace.

"The third highlight was the Prime Minister's message heard in the auditorium at 3 p.m. After he had declared Wednesday, May 9th, VE-day, we all stood and rejoicingly sang the Doxology.

"It was the consensus of opinion among the Chaplains present that two conferences should be held in the near future, if at all possible; one in Lancashire College, Manchester; and another on the Continent, preferably in Geneva. The possibility of the latter conference being held is dependent upon leave and T.D.s, which may be granted by Army authorities at a later date.

"We want to express to our Home Office our deep appreciation for the splendid co-operation and all the help we are receiving from the work of Mrs. Demarest. The vision and forethought of our Home Office in establishing such an office in London and in sending such a capable liaison officer are a matter of great pride to all American Congregational Chaplains in this theatre.

"If this should be the last Annual Assembly of our British Brethern at which American Chaplains will be present, it is our hope that in the future there will always be a representative of the American Congregational Christian Churches at the Annual Assembly of the Congregational Union of England and Wales; and, in order to continue the fine fellowship and foster a mutual understanding, we hope there will always be a Representative of the British Churches at Meetings of General Council in the States. We learned with great pleasure of the suggested interchange of visits by laymen and clergy between our two Church bodies."

EMANUEL CARLSEN.